UNITED NATIONS

Framework Convention on Climate Change

Distr.
LIMITED

FCCC/SBI/1997/L.1/Add.1
3 March 1997

Original: ENGLISH

SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Fifth session
Bonn, 25-28 February 1997
Agenda item 8 (a)

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Special Session on Agenda 21: inputs from UNFCCC

1. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was adopted in 1992, has received 165 instruments of ratification or accession assuring almost universal membership of States.

2. The Convention was one of the key outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and its objectives have a close relationship to the goals of sustainable development. It has linkages to the framework of Agenda 21, with relation to energy, transport, industry, agriculture, forests, water and waste management.

3. An important element in the global effort to address climate change and its impacts is the open exchange of information on the implementation of commitments of Parties under the Convention. This also contributes to developing international debate on longer-term trends in consumption and production patterns, in accordance with Agenda 21. National communications are submitted so that Parties inform each other of how they are meeting their commitments under the Convention and describe their climate change programmes and how these programmes will affect greenhouse gas emissions and sinks by the year 2000.

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4. In addition, the UNFCCC secretariat is mandated by the Parties to the Convention to prepare a compilation and synthesis of the national communications for consideration by them. A second such compilation and synthesis was submitted to the second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in which it considered the national communications of 33 Annex I Parties. The document provides an overview of the implementation of the Convention by reporting Parties, noting trends and patterns, areas of convergence and divergence, data gaps and other appropriate conclusions, including the overall effects of policies and measures. It demonstrated that while Annex I Parties are fulfilling their commitments to the implementation of national policies and measures on the mitigation of climate change, they need to make additional efforts to overcome difficulties that they face in achieving the aim of returning their emissions of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

5. Another link to furthering the goals of sustainable development is the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), whose Second Assessment Report is considered to be the most comprehensive and authoritative assessment now available of the scientific and technical information regarding global climate change. The IPCC has now initiated steps towards preparation of its Third Assessment Report to develop a better objective scientific understanding of issues related to climate change, its impacts and possible response options. This report is expected to enhance the formulation of climate change policies in the context of sustainable development.

6. New initiatives for cooperative implementation, including technology transfer and diffusion, between all Parties to the Convention and with the major groups in civil society are also being explored by the Parties of the UNFCCC. Through these linkages the key themes of Agenda 21 pertaining to integrated policy development, citizen participation in decision-making, institutional and human capacity building and global partnerships involving many stakeholders, are being addressed by the UNFCCC.

7. The UNFCCC has also taken first steps to deal with the continued rise of emissions and concentrations of greenhouse gases. The Berlin Mandate agreed by the first Conference of the Parties is the basis for considerable efforts under way in the Ad hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM). The COP, at its second session, called, inter alia, for acceleration of negotiations of the text of a protocol, or another legal instrument which would fully encompass the remit of the Berlin Mandate. The General Assembly, at its special session, may wish to encourage member States to agree on a satisfactory result of these negotiations at the third session of the COP, scheduled to be held in Kyoto in December 1997.

8. Steps are being taken by developing country Parties to prepare their initial communication of information related to implementation. The Global Environment Facility (GEF), as the interim operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention, is supporting developing country Parties in implementing their commitments by funding enabling activities such as planning and endogenous capacity building.

The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) called on the GEF to provide expeditious and timely support to these Parties and initiate work towards a full replenishment in 1997.

9. Further international action in the implementation of Agenda 21 will help to involve the whole international community in promoting the effective implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

10. Noting the relevant provisions of Agenda 21 relating to the transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity building, the COP at its first and second sessions took decisions related to these issues. The General Assembly may also wish to pay special attention to the transfer of technology.

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